

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 6747

USEC

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: ELAB PO
SUBJ: FORMATION OF NEW LABOR CONFEDERATION SET FOR OCTOBER

REF: LISBON 6666 (DTG 081645Z SEP 78)

SUMMARY:

THE INAUGURAL CONGRESS OF THE DEMOCRATIC UNION OF PORTUGUESE
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WORKERS (UDTP) WILL BE HELD IN LISBON NEXT MONTH. THE NEW
SOCIALIST-INSPIRED ORGANIZATION WILL REPLACE THE SHORT-LIVED
CARTA ABERTA MOVEMENT WHICH WAS OFFICIALLY DISBANDED LAST
WEEKEND IN COIMBRA (REFTEL). FORMER LABOR MINISTER
GONELHA AND OTHER SOCIALIST LABOR LEADERS HAVE BEEN INVOLVED
IN A SERIES OF ONGOING MEETINGS WITH THEIR PSD COUNTERPARTS
IN AN EFFORT TO PERSUADE THEM TO JOIN FORCES WITHIN THE

UDTP. PROSPECTS FOR THIS OCCURING ARE NOT GOOD BUT THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EVENTUAL PS/PSD UNION MERGER IS NO LONGER BEING DISMISSED OUT OF HAND. END SUMMARY.

1. ON SEPTEMBER 10 THE SOCIALIST LEADERS OF THE CARTA ABERTA MOVEMENT VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO DISBAND THE TWO-YEAR OLD ORGANIZATION IN FAVOR OF THE FORMATION OF A NEW NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNION CENTRAL, THE UDTP. THE INAUGURAL CONGRESS OF THE UDTP WILL BE HELD IN LISBON ON OCTOBER 21-22. ORGANIZERS OF THE CARTA ABERTA MEETING ARE PUBLICLY CLAIMING THAT DELEGATES FROM 58 UNIONS AND EIGHT FEDERATIONS REPRESENTING 500,000 WORKERS WERE PRESENT IN COIMBRA AND PARTICIPATED IN THE DECISION TO MOVE AHEAD WITH THE UDTP. (COMMENT: CONSIDERING THAT ONLY 18 UNIONS ATTENDED THE LAST NATIONAL MEETING OF CARTA ABERTA IN NOVEMBER 1977, THE "OFFICIAL" ATTENDANCE FIGURES SEEM GROSSLY EXAGGERATED. IN FACT THE FIGURES MAY MORE ACCURATELY REFLECT THE UDTP'S POTENTIAL MEMBERSHIP, AND THEN ONLY IN THE EVENT THE NUMERICALLY SUPERIOR PSD UNIONS COME INTO THE UDTP IN A FAIRLY SOLID BLOCK.)

2. GONELHA SEEKS PS/PSD FUSION

FORMER LABOR MINISTER MALDONADO BONELHA IS PERSONALLY HEADING-UP THE SOCIALIST SIDE IN ON-GOING TALKS WITH PSD LABOR LEADERS AIMED AT MERGING THE TWO FORCES UNDER THE CONFIDENTIAL

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BANNER OF UDTP. AS REPORTED REFTEL, PROSPECTS FOR SUCH A DEVELOPMENT ARE NOT VERY PROMISING PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF SOCIALIST INTERNAL DIVISIONS. GONELHA'S CHIEF RIVAL IN PS LABOR, MARCELO CURTO, DID NOT ATTEND THE FINAL CARTA ABERTA MEETING AND CONTINUES AGITATED BY THE DECISION TO CREATE THE UDTP WHICH HE SEES AS A THREAT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXCLUSIVELY SOCIALIST LABOR MOVEMENT. THE MORE PRAGMATIC GONELHA IS AWARE THAT THE SOCIALISTS ARE RUNNING A POOR THIRD TO THE PCP AND PSD IN TERMS OF UNION STRENGTH. UNLIKE CURTO, HIS VIEWS GO BEYOND NARROW PARTY INTERESTS. HE IS CONVINCED THAT PS/PSD COLLABORATION IN THE LABOR FIELD IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF DEMOCRATIC LABOR UNITY AND IN TURN, FOR THE CREATION OF A VIABLE DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED CGTP.

3. PSD IS WILLING

ACCORDING TO DR. MARIO PINTO, A PSD NATIONAL DEPUTY WHO IS WIDELY RESPECTED IN PS AS WELL AS PSD LABOR CIRCLES, MOST PSD UNIONS ARE WILLING TO GO ALONG WITH GONELHA PROVIDED THERE IS SOME ASSURANCE THAT THE PS WILL NOT SEEK TO TRANSFORM THE UDTP INTO A PURELY SOCIALIST ENTITY. HOW

GONELHA WILL MANAGE TO GIVE SUCH ASSURANCES WITH CURTO AND THE SOCIALIST LEFT OPPOSING PS/PSD COOPERATION AT ANY LEVEL IS PROBLEMATIC. PINTO IS NOT OPTIMISTIC BUT NEITHER IS HE PESSIMISTIC. HE SAID MUCH WILL DEPEND ON THE ABILITY OF GONELHA TO CONTROL HIS OWN SOCIALIST AS HE, GONELHA, ALREADY HAS THE TACIT AGREEMENT OF A MAJORITY OF PSD LABOR LEADERS.

4. COMMENT

NOTHING UNEXPECTED OCCURED AT THE CARTA ABERTA MEETING WHICH WOULD CHANGE OUR ASSESSMENT CONTAINED IN REFTEL. HOWEVER, WITH INDICATIONS THAT GONELHA IS NOW ACTIVELY BRINGING TO BEAR THE FULL FORCE OF HIS INFLUENCE
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AND REPUTATION IN SUPPORT OF THE UDTP AND DEMOCRATIC LABOR UNITY IN STEPPED-UP MEETINGS WITH PSD LABOR LEADERSHIP, THE POSSIBILITY OF A PS/PSD UNION MERGER IS NO LONGER BEING DISMISSED OUT OF HAND. ROWELL

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